



St. Paul's United Methodist Church of Odessa
Reaching Up Reaching In Reaching Out
Pastor Linda Ray, 406 Main Street, Odessa, DE 302-378-2420
www.stpaulsodessa.org, CCLI 11305346 and Streaming Lic. 21184487

Second Sunday of Advent

December 8, 2024, 11:00AM Service, ASL & Livestreaming
WE ENTER GOD'S GATES WITH PRAISE

WELCOME WITH MUSIC AND IMAGES

Mark Holden & June Stemmler - Photographer & Curator, Gail Garner ASL Interpreter

GATHERING MUSIC

LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT WREATH:

The Holland Family

One: The prophet Malachi calls us to watch for the messenger God will send us, a messenger who burns with a passion for God's coming salvation. "For he is like a refiner's fire and like fullers' soap; he will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and he will purify the descendants of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, until they present offerings to the LORD in righteousness" (Malachi 3:2b-3).

Many: In a world driven by a passion to maintain the status quo, we choose to live with a passion for God's peace, to listen to those who call us to righteousness, and to submit ourselves to God's grace, that we might be refined and purified until we reflect God's love throughout the earth.

One: We light this candle of peace as a sign of our commitment to passionately pursue the work of making peace.

Many: Peace in our hearts, our families, our communities, and throughout the earth until God's kingdom comes on earth as it is in heaven.

All Singing: O come let us adore Him. O come let us adore Him. O come let us adore Him, Christ the Lord.

(*Please stand in body or in spirit)

Liturgist – Nadine Johnson

*OPENING HYMN:

O Come, O Come Emmanuel vs. 1,2,6,7

Red Hymnal 211

*OPENING PRAYER: (all praying): **Compassionate God, greet us with your grace this day, for we need you. We cannot save ourselves. Though we may be frantic with activity, our efforts do not yield peace, peace as you can give. Today we would be quiet enough to hear your voice. Today we would be still enough to feel your touch. Help us to find that place where we can receive as well as give, wait as well as act, and listen as well as speak. Our whole world needs your peace. Let us come before you and learn your ways, laying down our weapons and feeding the hungry. Come to us now, through Jesus the Christ. Amen.**

WORDS FOR YOUNG BELIEVERS:

He Is Born

Red Hymnal 228

He is born the holy Child, play the oboe and bagpipes merrily! He is born the holy Child, sing we all of the Savior mild.

Courtney Martin shares a blessing with our children.

FIRST LESSON: *Malachi 3:1-4* (CEB)

Look, I am sending my messenger who will clear the path before me; suddenly the Lord whom you are seeking will come to his temple. The messenger of the covenant in whom you take delight is coming, says the Lord of heavenly forces. ²Who can endure the day of his coming? Who can withstand his appearance? He is like the refiner's fire or the cleaner's soap. ³He will sit as a refiner and a purifier of silver. He will purify the Levites and refine them like gold and silver. They will belong to the Lord, presenting a righteous offering. ⁴The offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasing to the Lord as in ancient days and in former years.

HYMN OF PREPARATION:

There's A Song In The Air

Red Hymnal 249

*GOSPEL LESSON: *Luke 3:1-6* (CEB)

In the fifteenth year of the rule of the emperor Tiberius—when Pontius Pilate was governor over Judea and Herod was ruler over Galilee, his brother Philip was ruler over Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias was ruler over Abilene, ² during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas—God’s word came to John son of Zechariah in the wilderness. ³ John went throughout the region of the Jordan River, calling for people to be baptized to show that they were changing their hearts and lives and wanted God to forgive their sins. ⁴ This is just as it was written in the scroll of the words of Isaiah the prophet,

A voice crying out in the wilderness:

*“Prepare the way for the Lord;
make his paths straight.*

⁵ *Every valley will be filled,
and every mountain and hill will be leveled.*

*The crooked will be made straight
and the rough places made smooth.*

⁶ *All humanity will see God’s salvation.”*

One: May this story inspire us all. **ALL: To walk in the way that leads to life.**

THE MESSAGE:

“The Word Became Flesh—Salt Of The Earth”

Pastor Linda Ray

WE GIVE THANKS

OFFERTORY PRAYER: We thank you God, for the joy we feel this day. We are blessed by this community of love, this sanctuary of acceptance. We place our trust in you, knowing that you care for us. With deep gratitude for all you provide for us, we offer our gifts to you. Center our hearts during this season of giving. Amen

THE OFFERTORY: Today’s **Yellow Hat** mission offering supports **12/08/24 El Ayudante Child, Yesprin.**

CHORAL ANTHEM:

Carol of the Star by Donald Moore

Chancel Choir

*THE DOXOLOGY:

Red Hymnal 95

GATHERING OF JOYS AND CONCERNS

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

PRAYER OF CONFESSION (all praying): **God of Grace, you blow the breath of life into our lungs, you have formed us in your image. And yet we acknowledge that sometimes we are not who you would have us be. You challenge us to embrace the refining fire of your love, to meet you on the threshing floor of life, to be washed as with fuller's soap. But in our heart of hearts we would rather keep those things that would be removed in such an encounter. Through your Grace, life-giving God, accept us as we are, unrefined, unwashed, the chaff mixed in with the grain. And help us to move into a new way of being. We pray in Jesus’ name. Amen**

INVITATION TO COMMUNION:

Pastor Linda Ray
Communion Server – Nadine Johnson

Reader 1: The Lord be with you.

ALL: And also with you.

Reader 1: Lift up your hearts.

ALL: We lift them up to the Lord.

Reader 1: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

ALL: It is right to give our thanks and praise.

Reader 1: : It is right, and a good and joyful thing, always and everywhere to give thanks to you, Almighty God, Creator and ruler of the universe. Your glory is a consuming fire; who can stand in your presence? Yet you have prepared the way for us, with a messenger of grace. You receive the humble offering of our lives as a precious gift. Therefore we praise you, joining our voices with choirs of angels with prophets, apostles, and martyrs, and with all the faithful of every time and place and join their unending hymn:

ALL: Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might, heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.

Reader 2: You are holy, O God of majesty, and blessed is Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord. Jesus Christ is our way in the wilderness: at his word, every valley is lifted and every mountain made low; in his body, all flesh shall see your saving power.

Lifting the bread) On the night in which Jesus gave himself up for us, he took bread, gave thanks to you, broke the bread, gave it to his disciples, and said: "Take, eat, this is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

Reader 1: (Lifting the cup) When the supper was over, Jesus took the cup, gave thanks to you, gave it to the disciples and said: "Drink from this, all of you; this is my blood of the new covenant, poured out for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me."

And so, in remembrance of these your mighty acts in Jesus Christ, we offer ourselves in praise and thanksgiving as a holy and living sacrifice in union with Christ's offering for us, as we proclaim the mystery of faith:

ALL: Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again!

Reader 2: Pour out your blessing upon this bread, O God. Wheat grown in the fields, and touched by yeast, becomes life-giving food. This bread is transformed by your love into the living presence of Jesus. Pour out your blessing upon this cup, juice from grapes grown in the sun. May we drink deeply of the forgiveness Jesus offers. Send your Spirit on this community, gathered her around your table. Through the power of the gospel of Jesus Christ that we share, bring to completion the good work that you began in us, and let our love for you and for one another overflow in abundance. . Through your Son Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit in your holy Church, all honor and glory is yours, almighty God, now and forever.

ALL: AMEN. AMEN. AMEN.

Reader 2: Let us join our hearts and voices in the prayer that God continues to teach us:

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the Kingdom, the Power and the Glory Forever. AMEN.

(The congregation will come forward to partake of the bread and cup.)

PRAYER AFTER RECEIVING

WE GO IN THE SPIRIT

OPPORTUNITIES FOR MINISTRY AND SERVICE

SENDING HYMN:

Angels From The Realms Of Glory

Red Hymnal 220

WORSHIP TODAY

Liturgist: Nadine Johnson

Audio/Video: Charlii Miller, John Littell, John Cate, Carlotta Cline, Garrett Ray

Communion Server: Nadine Johnson

Ushers: John & Patti Harmer, June Stemmler, John Harmon, Denis Shaffer, Laura Widger,
Ryan Vitsorek, Brook Ellis

Director of Music: Thomas Maloney, Organist/Accompanist: Jin Kyung Seo

Flowers this week are donated by Phil & Kris Elliott in memory of Kris' mom,

Joyce Knarr, on her 92nd birthday.

CONTACT INFORMATION

Rev. Linda Driver Ray, Pastor
Bonnie Valeski, Admin. Asst.
Alice Mullins, Financial/Treasurer

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ANNOUNCEMENTS - THIS WEEK AT ST. PAUL'S

Sunday 12/08	Worship Services 8:30AM and 11AM Livestreaming and ASL, Adult & Children's Bible Study 9:45AM, Annual Christmas Candlelight Service at Old Union Church, Townsend @3PM.
Monday 12/09	Adult Bible Study 9AM, Finance Team Mtg. 6:30 P.M.
Tuesday 12/10	Cub Scouts 6PM
Wednesday 12/11	4:30 ASL, TOPS Mtg 5:45 PM, Bells Rehearsal 6PM, Choir Rehearsal 7PM.
Thursday 12/12	Prayer and Praise Team 10 AM, Friends of Zoar 6 PM
Friday 12/13	
Saturday 12/14	Prayer and Praise Team Outing 10 AM, AA Mtg 7PM

DINGO & DESSERT: Sunday, December 15 at St. Paul's UMC 3-5PM. Play Dingo and enjoy desserts! Please bring one to share!

PLEASE BE AWARE!! The outside back steps are continuing to be a work in progress. For your safety, please do not cross or disturb the taped off areas.

FINANCE/TREASURER-ALICE MULLINS NEWS: Stewardship pledge totals through December 3, 2024 for the 2025 Budget:

55 Pledges, Total Pledge Amount: \$201,869 Thank you to all who have so generously pledged so far!

COMPASSIONATE CARD MINISTRY: As our Compassionate Card Ministry reorganizes, we are extending an invitation to anyone who would like to become a part of this ministry. We meet during the year to make the beautiful cards you receive; it is always fun! It is through our dedicated members that we can keep this ministry going. At this time, we need additional members who can help us to make the cards and be our writers and senders of these cards. For more information, please contact Jen Rodriguez at 302-932-2458, or Ellie Leuliette at 484-432-4673. Everyone is welcomed and appreciated!

FROM THE TREASURER: If there is a need for reimbursement, the **Committee Chairperson will need to complete a Disbursement Voucher**, list the account number, attach any receipts, and submit within 14 days; this is the best practice for auditing purposes. Once completed, place the Disbursement Voucher with receipts directly into the Treasurer/Financial black box which is hanging on the wall, on the landing leading up the stairs, to the church office. Disbursement Voucher forms are located in the mail bin outside the church office. Billing and reimbursement checks are sent out Tuesdays of each week. Thanks so much, Alice Mullins, Treasurer.

BIRTHDAYS: December 9 – Ryan Whitmer; December 10 – Casey Blum; December 11 – Duane Dillard, Helen George, Jonathan Ray; December 13 – Tracy Walls-Pilling; December 14 – Wendy Wallace.

ANNIVERSARIES: N/A

PRAYER REQUEST BOX is available in the Narthex along with the prayer request cards. Just complete the form, fold, and drop in the box on the corner shelf located at the second set of doors into Fellowship Hall. You can also email Bonnie in the Church Office at bonnie@stpaulsodessa.org.

PRAYERS FOR: David & Dorothy Dudgeon, Carolyn Akin, Jonathan Brooks, John Guy, Levi Schrum and family, Marilyn Hendershot, Dennis Downes, Jeffrey & Cheryl Martin, Nancy- sister of Alice Rizzo, Ethan Porter, George, Dylan Green, Kevin Quiveors – Al Calbazana's brother-in-law, Thomas Maloney's mother, John Littell, and Brenda Shaffer's nephew, Scott, Mindie, and Bo Pleasanton, Norman Parks, David Sheats, Amanda Branlund, who is going through cancer treatment, Terry Sweeney, Michael Whitehead who is doing better but still grateful for prayers, Barbara Apigian, Dan & Bev Moore and family, Angela Christian's mother, Kathy Golden, Sue Austin, the passing of Frank Hartenstein - Beth O'Grady's father, Georgiana Fennemore, Michael Stanley, Phil Elliott, Phil's parents, Faye Taylor's nephew Matthew Smith, Dick Leuliette, Bob, Ken, Wells, nephew of Steve Johnson - Matthew, Vickie Bush's mother – Pat McCall, Henry Spencer, June Stemmler, Blain

Shoun, Sue Holden, Justin Marusa – cousin to Cindra Holland, having lung surgery for lung cancer in January, Karen Ellis' friend Ellen who is having severe eye problems, also Karen Ellis' friend Cindy who needs prayers for healing and pain management after surgery, Skip Bason, Laura Sebastiano for relief from headaches, Kenzel Messick's brother Lem – for back surgery and recovery to go well, family of a teaching colleague of Pastor Patti's, the passing of the niece of Janet & Charlii Miller, Rev. Cindy & David Koski recovering from recent falls.

YELLOW HAT COLLECTIONS FOR DECEMBER 2024

12/01/24 Charity Waters (Carlotta Cline)

12/08/24 El Ayudante Child, Yesprin

12/15/24 Neighborhood House

12/22/24 Youth Group

12/29/24 Love Thy Neighbor

Please make sure ALL checks are made payable to St. Paul's UMC, including checks for the Yellow Hat missions, writing the organization's name on the memo line.

All donations are collected, recorded, entered in the system, and deposited into the Church's operating account on a weekly basis. Also, on a weekly basis, a check is mailed to the specified yellow hat organization for the total amount collected.

It is very important that donations be placed in the offering plate, yellow hat or mailed to St. Paul's UMC. You are also welcome to drop off donations in the black box on the wall just inside the side door to the Church, making sure it is secured in an envelope with your name on the front. This is to guarantee acknowledgement of your donations when the yearly contribution statement is sent for tax purposes.

Thank you all for your continued support for St. Paul's as we are growing in our faith through generosity. Alice Mullins, Treasurer



St. Paul's Mission Statement

Reaching Up to praise God in vibrant worship

God calls us to live out our discipleship grounded in Christ's awakening us to the glory and majesty of God in all creation, and we respond together by worshiping God with our gratitude and praise. Standing or lifting our hands high are both ancient postures of worship, and so our dance of discipleship involves reaching up with our hearts, souls, and bodies, lost in wonder, love, and praise.

Enter his gates with thanksgiving, and his courts with praise. Give thanks to him, bless his name.

For the Lord is good; his steadfast love endures forever, and his faithfulness to all generations.

Psalms 100:4-5 (NRSV)

Reaching In to deepen our spiritual walk with Christ

Christ accepts us as we are, and then calls us to follow him and learn from him, growing in our spiritual walk-through practices the church calls spiritual disciplines: prayer, fasting, meditation, studying God's Word, individually and with others. As we grow in the knowledge of God, we discover more about the extraordinary plans God has for our lives.

"If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free."

John 8:31-32 (NRSV)

Reaching Out with acts of love and compassion

Here's where it all comes together! Assured of God's eternal love, strengthened by the grace and knowledge of Christ, we are ready for the Holy Spirit to kindle a fire in our lives, gifting us for the labor of love God has prepared for us to accomplish. Having fallen in love with God, we love and serve our neighbors.

"Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me."
Matthew 25:40 (NRSV)

MISSIONS AND CONTACT INFORMATION

WEEKLY GATHERINGS – CHURCH BUILDING

OFFICE HOURS Tuesday -Thursday, 9 AM-2 PM

- Cub Scouts –Tuesdays 6-8 PM
- TOPS Meeting – Wednesdays 5:45 PM.
- St. Paul's Prayer and Praise Group Ministry – Thursdays 10 AM @Carole Harmon's Home
- St. Paul's Handbell Rehearsal – Wednesdays 6 PM.
- St. Paul's Choir Rehearsal – Wednesdays 7 PM
- AA Meeting – Saturdays 7 PM

MONTHLY GATHERINGS

- Finance Meeting – 2nd Monday 6:30 PM
- Trustees Meeting – 1st Monday 6:30 PM
- SPRC Meeting – 4th Thursday 6:30 PM
- Leadership Meeting – 3rd Tuesday 6:30 PM
- Reconciling Ministries – TBD

Adult Bible Study will resume Sunday, September 15, 2024 at 9:45AM.

Bible Study for all will again be held on Mondays, at 9AM.

Children's Sunday School will resume Sunday, September 15, 2024 at 9:45AM.

Flowers for Worship

If you are interested in honoring a loved one with flowers at the altar on a particular Sunday, we are asking you to contact Alicia Blackwell, from Wildflowers by Alicia to place your order. Alicia can be reached at (302) 593-9884. Also, please email the church office at bonnie@stpaulsodessa.org so we make sure the information is added in the bulletin.

Compassionate Card Ministry

The Compassionate Card Ministry is made up of 20 dedicated members of our congregation who create hand-made cards and encouraging messages to those in our directory, within our congregation, those on our prayer lists and others who are brought to our attention. Our purpose is to spread kindness and love to others through uplifting and personalized sentiments on hand-made cards. If you are not in our directory and would like to be added to our list, or if you know someone who would benefit from the blessing of a card, please contact Ellie Leuliette.

Prayer and Praise Group Ministry

Carole Harmon hosts a prayer circle, currently Thursday mornings at 10 AM - in person. Please contact Carole if you are interested in joining the group or have a special prayer request. You can also find prayer request cards and box on the corner shelf in the Narthex.

VANCO: Manage Your Giving Online

Giving online is easy and allows you to set up automatic recurring contributions and view your complete online giving history from anywhere you have access to the Internet. Simply follow these easy steps:

1) Visit the church website at www.stpaulsodessa.org and click on the VANCO Online Giving button to the left of the screen.

- 3) Click on the Link to Online Giving thru VANCO button, then
- 4) Follow the onscreen instructions to create an online profile and to schedule your RECURRING CONTRIBUTIONS.

Love Thy Neighbor Fund

Our "Love Thy Neighbor Fund" was created to help those in need in the MOT community. This fund may support a time in someone's life when he/she may need a little kindness and generosity to help endure and survive a challenging situation. If you can donate, please make checks payable to St. Paul's UMC and then write in the memo area it is for "Love Thy Neighbor Fund." Please note, this fund is SEPARATE from the Yellow Hat. Thank you, Love Thy Neighbor Committee

Deep Roots

Nadine Johnson & Karen Ellis continue to work with the "Deep Roots" mission. This group works with families who are disconnected through homelessness and provides transitional shelter and other services to families in need. They need your help as they continue to contact members of the church to help with making meals once a month feeding approximately 50+ individuals. Here's hoping you will be able to help us with this very important and necessary mission. Thanks so much! Contact Karen Ellis at iluvbrmuda@gmail.com and Nadine Johnson at nadine.faye.johnson@gmail.com

Our Daily Bread Food Donations

214 N Broad St, Middletown, DE 19709

Volunteers Needed – day and evening hours and different areas of need, filling bags, handing out meals, etc. Volunteer Opportunities can be found at <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10COE4FAEA82CA3F5CF8-volunteer>. Contact Sue Holden, Missions Co-Chair, at 802-324-6167, susieq2951@aol.com, with any questions. Also, find information and volunteer sign-up forms on the website. ODB is most thankful to all who donate either monetarily or in kind. Your generosity helps ODB feed those in our community who are facing food insecurity. Listed below are the items needed to stuff our side bags and other items that are needed on a regular basis. Donations can be dropped off on Tuesday from 9:15 to 11:30AM

- Individual bottles of water
- Individual bags of salty snacks
- Individual packets of sweet snacks
- Individual fruit cups and/or applesauce
- Fresh fruit (apples, bananas, oranges)
- Boxes of breakfast cereal
- Boxes of mashed potatoes
- White bread
- Baked beans (large cans)
- Gallon size zip-loc bags
- Lg black garbage bags
- Cans of soup

Thank you for any and all kindness!

Neighborhood House

Neighborhood House really appreciates St. Paul's ongoing support in so many ways. At this point, we are low on some items in the food pantry. These items are especially needed right now in our food pantry, though all donations are gladly accepted with the inventory being low now.

Currently we are really low on personal hygiene products as well as some food items:

1. **Bottled water**
2. **Toilet paper, Toothpaste, Soap, Shampoo & conditioner**
3. **Peanut butter & jelly (medium size)**
4. **Pasta sauce**
5. **Tuna/Tuna Helper**
6. **Hamburger Helper**

These non-perishables are needed to keep our pantry stocked:

Chef Boyardee, beef stew, Spam ,pancake mix/syrup, snacks - cookies, crackers etc.

ADDITIONALLY, THERE IS ALWAYS A NEED FOR ADULT SIZED DISPOSABLE DIAPERS AS WELL AS FOR BABIES/CHILDREN IN SIZES 4, 5, AND 6, AND WIPES. WE HAVE NUMEROUS MOMS WITH BABIES AND TODDLERS WHO TAKE THEIR MONEY FOR FOOD AND BILLS TO BUY THEM.

Donations can be left inside the Church. We look forward to another great year working together to feed the hungry. Thanks to all, Marilyn Hendershot, Family Services Specialist, Neighborhood House, Inc.



ST. PAUL'S
United Methodist Church of Odessa
Reaching Up. Reaching In. Reaching Out.

“Come to the Table”

“Come to the Table”

TIME AND TALENT SURVEY

*I feel God calling me to serve in these areas:
Please mark each category of interest where
you are willing to volunteer your time and
talents at St. Paul's this year. A separate survey
should be used for each individual in your
household including children and youth.*

Administration

- Leadership Team Co-chair
- Leadership Team Member
- Auditor
- Bookkeeper/Treasurer
- Computer Consultant
- Finance Team, Chair
- Finance Team, member
- Counter
- Lay Leader
- Lay Leadership Team (Nominations)
- Lay Servant
- Membership Team
- SPRC (Staff-Parish), chair
- SPRC (Staff-Parish), member
- Stewardship Team
- Trustees, chair
- Trustees, member
- Maintenance Team
- Yardwork

PROGRAM

- Nurture Team, co-chair
- Prayer Ministry participant
- Compassionate Card Ministry
- JOY (Just Older Youth)
- Fellowship Time Coordinator
- Green Church Team
- Bible Studies
- Congregational Care
- Deaf Ministries
- ASL Interpreter
- Photographer
- Reconciling Ministry Team
- Health Ministries Team
- Safe Church Team
- United Methodist Men, member

I pledge my support as a vital member or friend of St. Paul's United Methodist Church of Odessa with my prayers, presence, gifts, service, and witness.

My/our commitment to **prayer** is to pray for our Church and other needs _____ times each month.

My/our commitment to **presence** this year is to attend worship service _____ times each month.

I/we make a financial **pledge** of \$ _____ to the 2025 **General Budget** (Jan. 1-Dec. 31).

I/we will contribute this pledge to the **General Budget**:

\$ _____ weekly (52 contributions), or

\$ _____ semi-monthly (24 contributions), or

\$ _____ monthly (12 contributions),

\$ _____ as follows: _____

Annual giving estimates can be adjusted at any time. They may be placed in the offering plates in worship, mailed to the church office, or through online bank or credit card payments – see stpaulsodessa.org

Name(s): _____

Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____



St. Paul's United Methodist Church

406 Main Street – Post Office Box 253 – Odessa, Delaware 19730

October 27, 2024

Dear St. Paul's Family,

As we gather together in this blessed season, I am reminded of the profound invitation we find throughout Scripture: "Come to the table." This invitation is not merely a call to share a meal, but a divine invitation to partake in community, fellowship, and the grace of God.

In Luke 14:16-24, Jesus tells the parable of a great banquet where the host invites many to come. When the invited guests make excuses, the host opens the invitation wider, urging others to join him at the table. This story reflects our church's mission: to create a welcoming space for all, regardless of background or circumstance. It reminds us that God's love is inclusive and abundant.

As we reflect on this theme, I encourage you to consider how you can respond to this invitation. Coming to the table means engaging with one another, sharing our gifts, and contributing to the life of our church community. It means opening our hearts to those who may feel excluded and extending our hands to those in need.

Stewardship and Generosity

Our church thrives because of the generous hearts of our members. This year, we invite you to consider how you can support St. Paul's through your time, talents, and treasures. Your contributions enable us to continue our mission of service, outreach, and worship, ensuring that all are welcomed to the table.

We will be hosting a stewardship campaign over the next few weeks, and I encourage each of you to pray and reflect on how you can participate. Whether it is through financial giving, volunteering your time, or sharing your talents, every act of stewardship is a vital part of our church community.

Our expected and unexpected non-recurring expenditures this year along with a proposed aggressive budget for 2025 requires everyone to strongly consider increasing your financial commitment to St. Paul's UMC. **Accordingly, we are asking you to carefully (prayerfully) consider a 10% increase in total giving in 2024 for the 2025 program year.** We believe this will place us in a much stronger financial position for the coming year.

Join With Us

Let us gather in unity, love, and purpose. We will have opportunities to celebrate our community with a special service on Stewardship Sunday, November 17th, where we will reflect on our commitments and our collective mission. I hope you will join us as we come to the table together.

In closing, let us remember that our table is set wide enough for everyone. Together, we can create a space where all are invited to experience God's love and grace. Thank you for being an essential part of our St. Paul's family.

With blessings and gratitude,

Steve Johnson

Chair - Stewardship Committee

St. Paul's United Methodist Church